

04-00166 + 04-00211

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CONSUMER SERVICES DIVISION

JUL 14 2005

Tennessee Regulatory Authority
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, TN 37243

TN REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Ref: Docket #04-00166 & 04-00211

July 10, 2005

Dear Sirs and Madams,

I am Timothy McDonald, a retired Airline Captain, now married to Teresa Harris, a woman in the Tennessee Prison For Women. I include for your interest a story I wrote in January 2001 when I had first met Ms. Harris and witnessed her interaction with her children. Included also is a letter Ms. Harris wrote to the newspaper, one of many letters to many people in the process of raising and protecting her children. Included as well are the physical items of support, the knick-knacks and money she has sent as she could. One may understand by reading these papers that Ms. Harris has been very active and influential in raising her two children. These children, Drew and Savannah, are five times as likely to be incarcerated themselves as children in the general population. They have been raised in the same household around the same persons who destroyed their mother.

During twelve years of incarceration Ms. Harris has furnished her children the unconditional love and attention she never received herself as a child. Unlike herself they are honor role students with college on their horizon. Both are drug and alcohol free and to the extent of their mother's knowledge, which is extensive, they are sexually abstinent. Drew at sixteen is gainfully employed as he goes to school. Savannah at fifteen looks forward to the same.

Ms. Harris is succeeding with her children where she herself was totally failed. All of this is dependent on communication. Telephone contacts are a must. During times of crisis, and there have been many, telephoning is a daily event. Visitation is a must and has mostly been a monthly, but essential, event. Ms. Harris' children have been raised by her own parents. Money is in short supply and all are on Tenn Care until recently.

This Board must decide what price to charge for telephone contacts. Ms. Harris' children are a hundred miles away from her. Does the Board believe that raising telephone charges is in the best interest of the people of Tennessee? You will hear victims rights groups argue for higher phone charges to "punish these offenders." The ultimate punishment for Ms. Harris is to have her children follow her to prison. Is that what we want?

My wife is one of the greatest women of Tennessee. With letters, telephone calls, and visitation, she has raised her children from a prison cell. You have the power to thwart her efforts or further them. For prisoners like Teresa Deion Smith Harris, her telephone calls should be free. They serve the public interest. As a good citizen of Tennessee, I request you not raise prison phone rates, but reduce them. Give prisoners like Ms. Harris a chance to make a better world.

Tim McDonald
205 West Paris St.
Huntingdon, TN 38344

Tim McDonald

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JUL 13 2005

TN REGULATORY AUTHORITY
TELECOMMUNICATIONS DIVISION

OF MOTHERS, OF CHILDREN, OF RAZOR TOPPED FENCES

Excited greetings surround the five. The man and wife in their sixties are parents of the attractive thirty-year old woman. The boy twelve, the girl eleven, of different fathers are obviously children to the young mother in blue denim trousers and jacket. The shortened hugs and kisses dodge around the grandmother who is in a wheel chair. The blond young mother is the center of attention. It is she who's trouser legs state in white letters: *TN DEPT OF CORRECTIONS*, the standard uniform for inmates.

There are sixteen tables and four are empty. It is twelve-thirty and past second count. Thirteen women of near four hundred will have visitors today. A table is selected and additional chairs brought up. Drew and Savannah are seated on each side of their mother. They shout the word "Mom" with pent-up ecstasy. It is a common endearment denied these children except for this monthly week-end pilgrimage, now in its seventh year.

"Deion," says Grandpa as he produces the institutional debit card, "The kids have been real good." With this mom takes the kids to the vending machines. The Correctional Officer's gaze is only slightly interested as they slowly cross the worn gymnasium floor. A certain touching, finger hair-combing, is tacitly allowed mom as she waits for the snacks and soda to vend. She may try to linger and prolong the moment but eventually they must sit back down. A holiday air sets in as Pepsi cans open and Baby Ruths are unwrapped. The plastic table's poor fare could pass for a King's feast given the joy it brings.

Mom begins rituals by giving praise to each child in turn for their school grades. Each sibling excitedly reviews the minute detail of tests, schoolmates, and episodes since their last visit. The children's incautious voices contrast to the careful words of their mother as the C.O.s look on or listen as they choose.

Grandma inquires about Deion's roommate whom she regards as another daughter in spite of never seeing her in the free world. Deion lowers her voice to confirm that Tammy's gall bladder is still painful. Wilma nods and accepts the idea of misery and helplessness as life's entitlement for some people. Tammy is promised a separate visit when the weather warms up. Wilma apologizes for her crippling arthritis then obliquely comments on the absence of heat in the gym. She echoes Billy's praise for children and states that "Drew fixes me breakfast near every day."

The good behavior of the children paves the path for their aspirations. The Queenly inmate presides over hearings as each child's goal, hope, and petition is brought forth. Deion asks questions of her parents and mediates discussion between children and grandparents. Soon Drew's bowling and sports schedule is outlined. Equipment will have to be purchased. Next comes Savannah's hopes for cheerleader. Baton lessons and gymnastics enter the conversation. There is always the subject of money and "Who'll take them to their practice?" The boy sees fit to exert his superior age and size by commenting on any detail he can. Grandparents accept mom's superior role and defer to her judgment while silently knowing it is they who must execute her plans. As the discussion of the kid's activities deepens mom's brow becomes furrowed and her voice demanding as she fights for her children's needs. Savannah's lessons will cost her a week's prison wages.

There will be less money for clothes. Finally resolution is reached, Deion relaxes, and the children turn to her for games and play.

The gymnasium visitation area is not well stocked with playthings. Mother and son begin playing *scissors, rock, paper*. The petit blond girl swings her feet on the plastic lawn chair and contemplates her future on the rally squad. Soon Deion directs her attention to Savannah and the burly Drew wanders over to visit a family at another table. He is no stranger here and there are friends of common bond for this unique group of citizens. The C.O.s overlook the forbidden shift of tables for a boy of twelve. Without her brother's competition the shy girl turns bubbly and playful as mom's poking hands elicit giggles and squeals.

As visitation closing draws near the three-hour family bonding takes a melancholy tinge. Deion's hands, never in her lap, always rubbing her children, grow greedy for more touching. Grandparents look on thoughtfully, pleased to have given life once more to their own imprisoned girl. Only the children's joy eases the pain and remorse. When the guard calls out, "visitation's over" a small girl's eyes fill with tears. She bravely holds them back. The gregarious boy is oblivious to pain. In a manful stance he holds his head high, shunning his own feelings. Mom gives a parting hug and kiss which is allowed if conforming to public standards. Furtively, Deion makes a quick last minute demand; "Who loves who the most." Drew and Savannah reply dutifully "I love you the most." "No, I love you more," quips mom. Then the spell is broken and the Queen resumes her lifelong role as society's lowest. She joins her fellow prisoners against the cinderblock wall.

All smiles and waves, the women in denim with that white stripe begin filing into the departure room to be stripped naked and searched for contraband. The guard radio's the front security station, "Four freeworlds coming over," and motions the family to leave. Deion's father pushes his wife's wheelchair through the aging gymnasium door. Virtually out of habit he muses self-consciously "If we could have afforded a lawyer," and the children pass between razor topped fences to silently exit their mother's home.

To the Editor
Carroll County News-Leader
P.O. Box 888
Huntingdon, TN 38344,

March 24, 2003

I'm writing in regard to the corporal punishment used on in our schools. I was utterly astonished when I was informed that my daughter received corporal punishment for turning in homework late! The school file report states, "chose licks instead of detention." My daughter isn't old enough to decide if she can get her ears pierced or go to a school function without the consent of a parent. Why should she be allowed to choose corporal punishment without the same approval?

I clearly remember my 7th grade school year at Huntingdon Jr. High. I was removed from the classroom and led to a little room where my teacher told me to bend over and grab my ankles. He then proceeded to give me 3 licks with a large paddle. Would you like to know what's going through an adolescent girl's mind when this is happening? It is degrading and humiliating for an adult male to tell a twelve-year old girl to bend over and grab her ankles or knees! As she's bent over all her self worth and respect is stolen. The little girl asks herself, "Do all men get to do this to me?" "What did I do so bad to deserve this?" With what little dignity she has left she uses it to hold back the tears before she walks back into the classroom. Please tell me what good corporal punishment has done this little girl?

My daughter spends many days representing the school on the cheer squad. She works hard and struggles to keep her grades above average. Most children don't learn at the same pace as others. Have the teachers thought about taking a little extra time to help the student who doesn't comprehend as quickly as the others? I guess that's what corporal punishment is for! The bruises on her buttocks will remind her that she's a bad girl for not learning as quick as the other kids and turning her homework in late. Maybe next time she'll turn her homework in whether she understands it or not.

My daughter isn't the only girl in our school who's received corporal punishment that left bruises. On any morning ten students will be lined up for licks in the office.

Beating our children isn't helping them learn in school. It's doing more harm than good. I do understand children's need to be disciplined. Our schools need to learn to work with parents on discipline and homework problems. Please don't let this happen to our children any longer. Stop corporal punishment before it does any more damage!

But who am I to ask this of you? I'm just a concerned mother in prison doing life without parole because I was molested, raped, physically and mentally abused, and controlled by men as a child up through adulthood.

Will my cry of help to protect our children be heard?

Respectfully,

Teresa Deion Smith Harris 233590
T.P.W, Unit 2 North B-62
Nashville, TN 37218-3302

Deion's Child Support

Since being sent to the Tennessee Prison For Women in Nashville, May 1994, Deion has sent/bought/made for the kids and house in Huntingdon:

2000 cards in mail, 2/3rds hand made, with love, kisses, and encouragement

Bought mail order or money sent out

15 letters to school
\$300 Trampoline
\$150 Drew's shotgun
\$200 Cd boom boxes for each
\$35 ea. Month Drew's braces
\$300 playstation and games
\$30 average monthly phone bill, calls average one per week
\$50 average month bills
\$500 in msc toys
\$500 in cash to Drew
50% of the kids' clothing
75% of kids' shoes
Basketball stand and hoop
a dozen games and puzzles
Nintendo and 2 games
10 magazine subscriptions
2 eagle statues, 2 lava lamps
Doll for Savannah, Angel statue for Savannah
Water fountain centerpiece
14" Santa Statue

Crocheted or knit and craft items

10" bear, 8" cow, 6" elephant
15 Halloween Ornaments, 6" electronic Halloween witch
Blue and Gold Sweater
Waist pouch, 4 hats, 2 headbands and scarf
Drew's baseball glove award
Christmas tree of pipe cleaners
4 Halloween Baskets, 12" Halloween Wreath,
2 dozen Christmas Stockings
12 dozen average 6 x 10 decorated boxes, several 3" boxes
36" rug
six picture frames

All these are still visible in the house except the weekly cards are mostly gone.

Deion is the only source of brand name goods for the kids.

Most valuable are the cards and love. The children have never felt unwanted or unloved.